

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SAA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1999

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, XF, IS, JO
SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS AND THE PEACE PROCESS

REF: JERUSALEM 1845

1. RECENT SOUNDINGS WITH SPECTRUM OF WEST BANK MODERATES
REVEAL POTENTIAL FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION ON THEIR PART UP TO
NOW BLOCKED BY BEGIN'S STONEWALL ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST
BANK.

2. STRONGEST COMMITMENT GIVEN RECENTLY AT LUNCHEON HOSTED
BY DPO. AMONG GUESTS WAS HIKMAT AL MASRI, ONE OF FEW
PALESTINIANS ABLE TO PROJECT POLITICAL POWER THROUGHOUT
WEST BANK. AL MASRI EXPRESSED ABSOLUTE PESSIMISM THAT ANY
PROGRESS COULD BE MADE WHILE BEGIN HEADED GOI. BUT, HE
ADDED, SHOULD ANY GOI COMMIT ITSELF TO WITHDRAWAL FROM THE
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WEST BANK THEN HE WOULD PERSONALLY GUARANTEE THAT THE
PLO WOULD RECOGNIZE ISRAEL AND NEGOTIATE WITH THE JEWISH
STATE. MORE THAN THAT, HE SAID IF THE PLO SHOULD REFUSE
TO DO SO, HE HIMSELF WOULD LEAD A WEST BANK
NEGOTIATING TEAM.

3. AL MASRI'S COMMENTS WERE SECONDED BY RAMALLAH LAWYER

AZIZ SHEHADEH. THE LATTER, HOWEVER, STRONGLY OBJECTED TO A PRIORI LINKS BETWEEN THE WEST BANK ENTITY AND JORDAN. (COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT SHEHADEH HAS BEEN URGING A MORE ACTIVE WEST BANK ROLE IN MEETINGS WITH MAYORS AND OTHERS SINCE HIS RECENT VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES DURING WHICH HE BECAME CONVINCED OF THE USG'S GOOD FAITH IN PURSUING A ME PEACE SETTLEMENT.)

4. BIR ZEIT PROFESSOR NAFIZ NAZZAL IS ALSO SUPPORTING A MORE ACTIVE WEST BANK ROLE. DURING RECENT CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF, HE SAID HE BELIEVED BOTH YASER ARAFAT AND KHALIL AL WAZIR SUPPORT A LARGER ROLE FOR WEST BANK PALESTINIANS PRIMARILY AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO REJECTIONISTS. NAZZAL SAID AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR KREISKY HAS SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY TO HIM OF ORGANIZING A DELEGATION OF WEST BANK MODERATES TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE THIS FALL IN VIENNA WHICH WOULD ALSO INCLUDE PLO MODERATES AND, POSSIBLY, ISRAELI DOVES.

5. BY AND LARGE, WEST BANK ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN MORE CAUTIOUS IN ADDRESSING POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS. (SEE REFTTEL.
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